

OSIC Meeting Notes – January 17, 2024 7:00 PM

In attendance: Chuck Plaisted, Jeff Keay, Paul Lekberg, Peder Pedersen, Jim Wilkinson

Guests: Steve Wallace, Christine Nelson

Meeting called to order: 7:04pm.

1. C. Plaisted asked if the meeting was being recorded by anyone. All replied in the negative.
2. J. Wilkinson moved to accept the agenda for January 17, 2024. Motion 2nd by P. Lekberg and carried unanimously.
3. Note taker: J. Keay volunteered.
4. P. Pedersen moved to accept the minutes of the December 13, 2023 meeting as written. Motion 2nd by J. Wilkinson and carried unanimously.
5. Overlay Map of Sterling describing Open Space concerns
 - C. Plaisted explained that the map would be of 61A properties, with overlays explaining why these properties would be of critical importance, or lesser importance, to keep as open space. Properties of critical importance would be those that are a water resource, prime agricultural land, critical natural landscape, part of a wildlife corridor, and other considerations.
 - The primary need of the map is to allow us to clearly see and then contact 61A owners of critical open space properties, and those whose properties are of some importance, who are planning to leave the program, and alert them to options for selling their properties that would maintain open space.
 - Sterling Town Planner Steve Wallace let us know that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission has a local grant opportunity available. He is willing to present a grant proposal to the MRPC, but would like us to provide information on 61A properties to help him make his presentation. He will need the information by February. We will be working to provide this information.
6. Butterick Nature Trail improvement project
 - C. Plaisted is putting together information for P. Fox who would like to see improvements to the trail and to rename it in honor of Jeffrey E. Cranson. We discussed who P. Fox should be in contact with, such as the Conservation Committee, for permissions and help with improving the trail.
7. Condition of the Pine Hill Esker Trail
 - P. Pedersen reported that logging, contracted by DCR, in the area has eliminated the trail. He contacted DCR about the problem and the DCR Service Forester, Chris Capone, responded by letter. Mr. Capone apologized but said that nothing can be done at this time. He said that he will walk the trail in the spring to check it out.
8. Clinton DPW work update on the Lynde Basins Trail
 - After the snows are off the trail, P. Pedersen will contact M. Ward to arrange to walk the trail with him.

9. Update on OSIC budget proposal for FY2025

- C. Plaisted reported that he has requested a budget of \$3,000.

10. Reserve Fund of Chapter 61 Land purchases

- C. Plaisted noted that Westminster instituted a town Reserve Fund for land purchases. The fund will be given \$5,000 each year. The committee noted that a land purchase would require much more money than even the accumulation of funds over a number of years would be capable of raising, so we will not pursue the idea.

11. Discussion of the analysis of the Open Space value of Chapter 61 parcels

- Presented and discussed some of the Open Space values for properties based on our findings. Looking for properties with wildlife corridors, agricultural value, scenic views, as well as those within a watershed, and other considerations. J. Keay will consolidate the findings.
- The next step will be to have the Assessors Office send letters to 61A owners, inviting them to a meeting in March to discuss our findings.
- Discussed the need for a joint meeting with the Sterling Land Trust in order to pool our information and knowledge.

12. New Business

- There was no new business to discuss.

13. Next Meeting Date: Wednesday, February 21, 2024 at 7:00pm.

14. Adjournment: J. Keay moved to adjourn. Motion 2nd by C. Plaisted and carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:40pm.

Respectfully Submitted: Jeff Keay